

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2965, the *Don't Ask Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010*. This will be the second time this year that the House votes to repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, and I urge my colleagues to support it.

Opponents of repeal are out of touch with the American people, out of touch with the American military, and out of excuses. For years, Republicans in the House and Senate have claimed that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would threaten unit cohesion. America's troops and military leaders disagree. In the Pentagon's comprehensive review of this issue, 70 percent of service members surveyed believed that repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" would have no negative effect on the performance of their units. The military's top leaders, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen-both appointed by President Bush-have strongly advocated for repealing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

At a time when our military is fighting two wars, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is hampering our Armed Forces, and harming our national security. According to a GAO report, the military had discharged over 750 mission-critical service members by 2003 because of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," including over 320 service members with language skills-such as Arabic and Pashto-that are critical to our success in Iraq and Afghanistan. As reported by the *Washington Post*, there are an estimated 66,000 gay Americans currently serving in the military; that's 66,000 American troops who could be discharged tomorrow simply because they are gay.

Madam Speaker, today I will vote to end a policy of open discrimination against a group of courageous Americans-men and women who proudly serve in the Armed Forces and put their lives on the line to defend our country. For thousands of gay and lesbian veterans who have been discharged from the military over the years, Congress has acted too late. Nonetheless, it is time to honor their service by providing a new generation of patriotic gay and lesbian Americans the opportunity to serve our country proudly and openly.

I urge my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 2965, and I call upon Members of the Senate to do the right thing by repealing this destructive policy once and for all.